



Insights Health Networking

What makes your job sexy?

Is it overseas travel? Working with beautiful and important people? Or just estimating outstanding claims dressed in something a little bit sensual?

This was the first question posed to panellists and some of the answers they provided at the Health Practice Committee's recent Insights Health Networking session. Attended by corporate actuaries, consultants, investment bankers and even the regulator, this evening event was an opportunity to hear about the work and opportunities that actuaries are finding in the health sector in Australia and overseas. After some initial drinks and mingling we heard some interesting views on this topic.

Bronwyn Hardy and Hadyn Bernau spoke about their involvement in Private Health Insurance from different perspectives – as actuaries for an insurer and the regulator respectively. Nicole Stransky spoke about her work with health savings accounts in Singapore whilst Kirsten Armstrong presented a consultant's view from the wider health sector, noting that 90% of the Australian health sector isn't funded by consumers through their health insurance.

The panellists' stories revealed a number of consistent themes.

- Many actuaries working in 'Health' don't spend a lot of time working with other actuaries.
- Their roles aren't overly technical.
- The key to their success is the ability to communicate with often very intelligent but non-technical audiences.

I was particularly encouraged by the strong sense that each of the panellists felt that they were making a difference to their clients, whether their work was making a contribution to firm strategy, a decision making process, or to the wider population through government policy.

Given that the work sounds so satisfying what are the issues and opportunities for actuaries working in health?

In Private Health Insurance, there may well be a greater role for Appointed Actuaries (and their teams) as part of the regulator's revision to the capital standards. Session attendees were treated to the 'scoop' that an industry

discussion paper is expected in the next couple of months. Panellists also expected that further M&A activity and the challenge of establishing whether 'Broader Health Cover' initiatives (such as out of hospital care) actually save money and will provide additional work for actuaries.

Outside of health insurance it is clear that the sheer size of the Health Sector (between 9-11% of Australia's GDP) means that there are a great number of opportunities for actuaries to get involved with providers and policy makers. Key amongst those discussed were:

- Assisting policy makers understand the impacts of ageing, not only on policy costing, but through advising on allocation optimisation and understanding equity issues between different generations;
- Evaluating health initiatives and assisting policy makers develop measures that capture quality and customer outcomes, as well as financial ones;
- Helping providers and policy makers deal with and make better use of vast data collections. In particular, Kirsten pointed out that upcoming Commonwealth roll-out of personal electronic health records will generate large amounts of longitudinal health data – data which hasn't previously been available in Australia.

If we add to this list the rise of the middle class in Asia and their likely desire to spend more money on managing their health it is clear that the Health sector is a growth sector and one in which actuaries have the potential to make a real contribution.

If you are considering an actuarial career in Health or just want to learn a little more about the opportunities out there why not download the audio from the panel discussion. Or if you want to know more about how you could develop your skills in Health check out the Health Practice Committee section on the Institute website. We have just uploaded a CPD page which provides a number of useful links for further reading and education opportunities.

Many thanks must go to our panellists Bronwyn, Kirsten, Nicole and Haydn for their willingness to share their experiences and views with us, Ben Ooi for moderating, and for the health actuaries in the audience who added to the discussion. 

